

"Some years ago, in a lonely mountain valley in the canton of Glarus, I was conversing with a peasant landowner about the Landsgemeinde (popular primary assembly) which regulates the affairs of the canton. After he had given me some details, I asked him whether it was not the fact that all citizens had the right of attending and voting in this assembly. 'It is not so much their Right,' he replied, 'as their Duty.'

"This is the spirit by which free governments live. One would like to see more of it here in London, where Parliamentary and County Council elections often bring little more than half the voters to the polls. One would like to see more of it in the United States, where in many places a large proportion of the voters take no trouble to inform themselves as to the merits of the candidates or the political issues submitted to them, but vote blindly at the bidding of their party organizations.

"This little anecdote of my Swiss friend illustrates what I mean in speaking of patriotism as the basis of the sense of civic duty. If people learn to love their country, if their vision is raised beyond the petty circle of their personal and family interests to appreciate the true width and splendour of national life, as a thing which not only embraces all of us who are now living here and grouped in a great body seeking common ends, but reaches back into the immemorial past and forward into the mysterious future, it elevates the conception of citizenship, it fills the sheath of empty words with a keen-edged sword, it helps men to rise above mere party views and to feel their exercise of voting power to be a solemn trust.

"Love thou thy land with love far brought

From out the storied Past and used  
Within the Present, but transfused  
Through future time by power of  
thought.

"Into these feelings even the poorest citizen may now enter. Our British institutions have been widened to admit him; the practice of using the powers intrusted to him ought to form in him not only knowledge but the sense of duty itself. So, at any rate, we have all hoped, so the more sanguine have predicted. And as this feeling grows under the influence of free institutions, it becomes itself a further means of developing new and possibly better institutions, such as the needs of the time may demand. Let me take an illustration from a question which has been much discussed of late, but still remains in what may be called a fluid condition. The masses of the British people in these isles, and probably to a large extent also the masses of the people in our colonies, are still imperfectly familiar with the idea of a great English-speaking race over the world, and of all which the existence of that race imports. Till we have created more of an imperial spirit—by which I do not mean a spirit of vainglory, or aggression, or defiance—far from it—but a spirit of pride and joy in the extension of our language, our literature, our laws, and our commerce over the vast spaces of the earth and the furthest islands of the sea, with a sense of the splendid opportunities and solemn responsibilities which that extension carries with it—till we and our colonies have more of such an imperial spirit, hardly shall we be able to create the institutions that will ere long be needed if all these scattered segments of the British people are to be held together in one enduring fabric. But if sentiment ripens quickly, and we find ourselves able to create those institutions, they